

# It's all in the wrapper!!

Childhood obesity rates are on the increase in New Zealand. This coincides with families eating more meals away from home and portion sizes being much bigger. The food industry now produces more and more snack food items for supermarket shelves, which it markets vigorously to children and adults. Often these snacks are just the same food manufactured into a different shape and given a new wrapper to suit the latest children's movie or TV show! It is no surprise that parents are tempted or nagged into buying all these different bars and many young children at early childhood centres have an array of packaged foods in their lunch boxes!

- The average packet of muesli bars at around \$3.80 works out to be **\$15.20 per kg!** They often contain mainly sugar and fat and very few other nutrients so are not as good a deal as they seem. Apples and bananas are around **\$2 - \$3 a kilogram** and are a filling and nutritious snack!
- Young children develop most of their taste preferences in the first 7 years of life. Providing a variety of different foods like breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables is important to developing children's tastes. If they are mainly exposed to **packaged snack foods, which often all have the same taste, or textures** their food selection is likely to be much more limited in the long term and so is their nutrient intake.
- Next time you are shopping for a healthy alternative snack bar beware of misleading information on the package. If a product says it "**contains real fruit**" it is worth reading the fine print on the package to find out how much fruit it actually contains. It can be as little as 3% fruit in some bars! **Most snack bars and fruit rolls contain mainly sugar.** They are high in calories and usually low in vital nutrients for growth and development.
- The **effect on children's teeth** is also an important one to consider. Sticky snacks with a high concentration of sugar should be kept as occasional foods to prevent tooth decay.

## Snack ideas for active kids:

- Monkey roll – banana in bread
- Fresh fruit – serve whole or chopped into bite size portions
- Veggie sticks – chilled and served with a dip
- Sandwiches/toasties – peanut butter, vegemite, ham, baked beans or thinly sliced cheese. Jam and sweet spreads are fine occasionally!
- Muffins, fruit buns, scones, pikelets, plain crackers/biscuits
- Popcorn – pop using only a little oil or margarine
- Yoghurt, custard in pottles, cubes of cheese
- Fruit smoothie/ Milo - made with green top or light blue top milk. Low fat milk is fine for children over the age of 2.

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## Healthy Nibbles for Tots

Nutrition and physical activity Information for Under 5s

For more information visit: [www.cph.co.nz](http://www.cph.co.nz)

Date: January 2005

Code/Reference: NUT0022h

Authorised by: Nutrition and Physical Activity Team